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The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Letter dated 15 November 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the communiqué of the London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the communiqué circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 175, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict".

(*Signed*) Jeremy **Greenstock**

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Annex to the letter dated 15 November 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

London Intergovernmental Meeting on Conflict Diamonds: communiqué issued on 26 October 2000

Representatives of 36 Governments, representing the world's leading rough diamond exporting, processing and importing States, the European Commission and the World Diamond Council, met in London from 25 to 26 October 2000.

The objective of the meeting, was to build on the momentum of the South Africa-led Kimberley process by sensitizing a wider range of key States to the problem of conflict diamonds.

Participants welcomed the Kimberley Joint Ministerial statement of 21 September 2000, in particular the readiness of South Africa and others to co-sponsor a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly, and welcomed the readiness of the Government of Namibia to host further expert discussions.

They welcomed the action taken by the United Nations Security Council to address the problem of conflict diamonds, through the adoption of resolutions 1173 (1998) on Angola and 1306 (2000) on Sierra Leone and relevant decisions such as resolution 1304 (2000) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and emphasized the need to ensure their effective implementation. They welcomed the efforts taken so far by the Governments of Angola, Sierra Leone and others.

They emphasized the urgency of curbing the trade in conflict diamonds given the suffering and misery caused by the link to the illegal arms trade. They recognized that whilst conflict diamonds constituted only a small percentage of the whole diamond trade, they were an important factor in prolonging conflict, in parts of Africa, and had the potential to damage the legitimate industry on which many livelihoods depend, especially in those developing countries heavily reliant on the diamond industry.

They accepted that the special nature of the diamond trade, stemming from the diversity of the product and the structure of the trade, made it even more difficult to apply bureaucratic forms of control than elsewhere.

They recognized the tradition of self-regulation existing within the trade and the constructive proposals of the World Diamond Council, set up by the industry to address the problem of conflict diamonds. They also recognized that civil society has played an important role in helping to raise awareness of the issue. They underlined the importance of the continuing involvement of industry and civil society in working together with Governments to devise solutions to the problems.

They underlined the need to devise effective and pragmatic measures to address the problem of conflict diamonds, which complied with international law and which would not impede the legitimate diamond industry or impose undue burden on Governments or industry (especially small producers).

Participants welcomed the start of a broader process to address the problem. The key elements for consideration would include:

- The creation and implementation of a simple and workable international certification scheme for rough diamonds, such as that proposed by the Kimberley process and the World Diamond Council;
- That the scheme would be based primarily on national certification schemes;
- The need for national practices to meet internationally agreed minimum standards;
- The aim of securing the widest possible participation;
- The need for diamond exporting, processing and importing States to act in concert;
- The need for appropriate arrangements to help ensure compliance, acting with respect for States' sovereignty;
- The need for transparency.

They recognized that the conflict diamonds problem was complex, and solutions would need to evolve over time. But they fully recognized the need for early and decisive further action by Governments and industry working together.

Participants agreed that the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly debate is an important opportunity to further negotiations on an international rough diamonds certification scheme involving all interested parties. They agreed to work together to ensure that the momentum of the Kimberley process is maintained and strengthened.